United Nations ST/SGB/1999/8

Secretariat

22 June 1999

Secretary-General's bulletin

Organization of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The Secretary-General, pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/5, entitled "Organization of the Secretariat of the United Nations", and for the purpose of establishing the organizational structure of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,[1] promulgates the following:

Section 1
General provision

The present bulletin shall apply in conjunction with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/5, entitled "Organization of the Secretariat of the United Nations".

Section 2
Functions and organization

2.1 The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

(a) Assists the Secretary-General in the coordination of humanitarian emergencies that require a system-wide response, by virtue of their magnitude or complexity;

(b) Works closely with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as well as relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

(c) Ensures coordination between humanitarian, political and peacekeeping dimensions of emergencies;

(d) Provides substantive support to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on humanitarian issues;

[1] The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supports the Under-Secretary-General, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, in carrying out his or her functions, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950).

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(e) Seeks to strengthen humanitarian response capabilities for natural disasters as a contribution to sustainable development, working closely with the members of the Steering Committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and other Decade framework partners.

2.2 The Office is divided into organizational units, as described in the present bulletin.

2.3 The Office is headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who is the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Under-Secretary-General and the officials in charge of each organizational unit, in addition to the specific functions set out in the present bulletin, perform the general functions applicable to their positions, as set out in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/5.

Section 3
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

3.1 The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, as the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is accountable to the Secretary-General.

3.2 The Under-Secretary-General acts as the Secretary-General's main adviser on humanitarian issues and is responsible for all the activities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as its administration.[2] The Under-Secretary-General:

(a) Provides leadership, on behalf of the Secretary-General, in the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, ensuring the timely, coherent and coordinated response of the international community to disasters and emergencies;

(b) Ensures horizonal coordination with the political and peacekeeping departments and vertical coordination with agencies involved in humanitarian emergency;

(c) Advises the Secretary-General on matters related to the coordination of humanitarian assistance, and serves as Convenor and Chairman of the Inter-Agency Standing Committees and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs;

(d) Provides guidance and instructions to humanitarian coordinators in the field;

(e) Serves as advocate for humanitarian laws, principles and objectives, interacting with Members States on humanitarian law;

(f) Promotes the mobilization of international support for the United Nations system's humanitarian activities and mobilization of resources for emergency relief programmes;

(g) Undertakes, on behalf of the Secretary-General, missions to ongoing or incipient complex emergencies and natural disasters;

(h) Manages the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

[2] In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182, and the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950), the Under-Secretary-General's functions are focused on three core functions:
(a) Policy development and coordination functions in support of the Secretary-General;
(b) Advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs of the United Nations;
(c) Coordination of humanitarian emergency response by ensuring that an appropriate response mechanism is established through Inter-Agency Standing Committee consultations on the ground.

Section 4
Office of the Under-Secretary-General

4.1 The Office of the Under-Secretary-General is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General.

4.2 The core functions of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General are as follows:

(a) Monitoring the implementation of responsibilities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs with regard to its policy, advocacy and coordination responsibilities;

(b) Advising the Under-Secretary-General on policies and guidelines and dealing with specific policy and management issues/problems;

(c) Preparing reports and notes on humanitarian and managerial issues for consideration by the Under-Secretary-General;

(d) Acting as focal point on information on all aspects of the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(e) Coordinating interdepartmental activities and undertaking the necessary follow-up;

(f) Consulting, negotiating and coordinating with other departments, offices, funds and programmes on matters of mutual concern;

(g) Representing or ensuring representation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs at appropriate meetings.

Section 5
Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, in the performance of his or her activities, is assisted by a Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, based in New York. The Deputy is responsible for supporting the Under-Secretary-General, as required, in the discharge of his or her duties. The Deputy is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General.

Section 6
Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator and Director, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva

The Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator, who is also the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva, is based in Geneva:

(a) Advises the Under-Secretary-General on the development of policy recommendations and strategies for initiatives by the Secretary-General related to the coordination of emergency humanitarian programmes, as well as on the implications of new requirements emanating from the substantive initiatives undertaken by the Geneva office;

(b) Provides overall supervision of the activities carried out by the Geneva office;

(c) Maintains liaison with Member States, representatives of the international donor community, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and operational agencies active in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance;

(d) Provides support, as required, to intergovernmental deliberations in Geneva;

(e) Represents the Under-Secretary-General, at his or her request, at intergovernmental and other meetings.

Section 7
Executive Office

7.1 The Executive Office is headed by an Executive Officer who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General.

7.2. The core functions of the Executive Office include those set out in section 7 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/5 and encompass the provision of personnel, financial, resource planning and general administrative services to the organizational units of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York and Geneva, as well as in the field, for both the regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, including the administration of substantive trust funds and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

Section 8
Policy, Advocacy and Information Division

8.1 The Policy, Advocacy and Information Division, based in New York, is headed by a Director who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General.

8.2 The Division consists of two branches, namely, the Policy Development and Advocacy Branch and the Information Management Services Branch.

Section 9
Policy Development and Advocacy Branch

9.1 The Policy Development and Advocacy Branch is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Director of the Policy, Advocacy and Information Division. The Branch consists of two organizational units, namely, the Policy Development Unit and the Advocacy and External Relations Unit.

9.2 The core functions of the Policy Development Unit are as follows:

(a) Promoting respect for humanitarianism, including through contributions to legislative processes, highlighting and articulating policy concerning the realization of humanitarian action in conflict settings;

(b) Identifying humanitarian issues that require study, and supporting or undertaking research to enhance overall understanding of those issues and to assist in the formulation of policy guidelines and their application;

(c) Supporting and assisting inter-agency consultative efforts aimed at policy development in the humanitarian arena;

(d) Initiating or undertaking in-depth reviews of specific issues or situations as part of a structured lessons-learned programme;

(e) Supporting the preparation of annual and periodic reports, including the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

9.3 The core functions of the Advocacy and External Relations Unit are as follows:

(a) Formulating and implementing the information and communication strategy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(b) Developing public information campaigns for the Office and evaluating their impact;

(c) Maintaining regular contacts with the media, acting as spokesperson and representing the Office in United Nations press briefings;

(d) Making arrangements for conferences/seminars/meetings organized by the Office, and providing the necessary support;

(e) Ensuring that Governments, non-governmental organizations and other external bodies are kept regularly informed of the activities of the Office and the United Nations in the field of humanitarian assistance.

Section 10
Information Management Services Branch

10.1 The Information Management Services Branch is headed by a Chief, who is accountable to the Director of the Policy, Advocacy and Information Division. The Branch consists of two organizational units, namely, the Information Analysis Unit and the Information Technology Unit.

10.2 The core functions of the Information Analysis Unit are as follows:

(a) Enhancing the early warning capability of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations and the humanitarian community;

(b) Managing the publications programme of the Office in both print and electronic form;

(c) Managing the information resource centre of the Office.

10.3 The core functions of the Information Technology Unit are as follows:

(a) Developing and managing the office automation, telecommunications and information technology systems of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(b) Developing and implementing a comprehensive training programme in information systems for Office staff;

(c) Developing and managing the Office's electronic document management system, and operating its integrated database management system, including general purpose databases and country-specific information databases;

(d) Disseminating emergency reports of the Office, maintaining a consolidated address database for all emergency communications from the Office, and producing directories of emergency officials;

(e) Developing and managing ReliefWeb, an inter-agency information exchange project.

Section 11
Emergency Liaison Branch

11.1 The Emergency Liaison Branch, based in New York, is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General.

11.2 The core functions of the Branch are as follows:

(a) Advising the Under-Secretary-General on policy questions relating to complex emergencies;

(b) Supporting the Under-Secretary-General in bringing humanitarian issues to the attention of the Security Council and other legislative bodies of the United Nations;

(c) Monitoring the proceedings of the Security Council and the General Assembly and preparing reports and briefing notes, as required;

(d) Providing information and guidance on political and peacekeeping developments to United Nations agencies, the Geneva office and field coordination units;

(e) Providing policy advice to humanitarian field coordinators;

(f) Maintaining liaison and coordinating policy with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator and United Nations operational agencies, especially those based in North America;

(g) Participating in interdepartmental fact-finding and technical survey missions;

(h) Supporting the Complex Emergency Response Branch of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in resource mobilization, needs assessment and the establishment of field coordination arrangements;

(i) Cooperating with the Policy, Advocacy and Information Division of the Office in general policy development and lessons-learned studies.

Section 12
Inter-Agency Standing Committee/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs secretariat

12.1 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs secretariat is headed by a Coordinator who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General. A liaison unit, based in Geneva, is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator.

12.2 The core functions of the secretariat are as follows:

(a) Facilitating the work of the Standing Committee and the Executive Committee as effective, action-oriented and well-coordinated decision-making bodies;

(b) Facilitating regular and ad hoc meetings of the Standing Committee, its Working Group and the Executive Committee;

(c) Ensuring preparations for each meeting of the Standing Committee, the Working Group and the Executive Committee, including timely preparation of agenda items;

(d) Preparing and disseminating minutes and records of meetings and decisions taken;

(e) Monitoring the implementation of the decisions of the Standing Committee, the Working Group and the Executive Committee;

(f) Preparing annual work plans;

(g) Maintaining administrative communication channels between members.

Section 13
Disaster Response Branch

13.1 The Disaster Response Branch, based in Geneva, is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General through the Director of the Geneva office.

13.2 The Disaster Response Branch consists of four regional desks (Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Newly Independent States, the Americas and the Caribbean and Africa), the Joint United Nations Environment Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit and a desk for the follow-up to the Chernobyl accident. The Branch also includes the following support units: Field Coordination Support

Unit; Military and Civil Defence Unit; Logistics and Transport Unit; and a desk for emergency telecommunications.

13.3 The core functions of the regional desks, the Joint Environment Unit, and the desk for the follow-up to the Chernobyl accident are as follows:

(a) Building a collaborative relationship with United Nations resident coordinators (and, through them, with other relevant United Nations, national and non-governmental humanitarian actors) and regional organizations, for early warning and response-preparedness purposes;

(b) Developing and improving baseline data on regions/countries, information systems and networks relevant to each region;

(c) Preparing and disseminating situation reports on disaster situations and needs for international assistance;

(d) Launching international appeals and tracking contributions;

(e) Providing reports to donors on funds donated by them through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(f) Facilitating the institutional hand-over from the emergency phase to the rehabilitation/reconstruction phase;

(g) Providing environmental emergency services to Governments (i.e., mobilization of international assistance and assessment, as well as advisory services); maintaining and, where required, expanding a network of national focal points and a roster of environmental stand-by experts;

(h) With regard to the Chernobyl accident, providing advisory services to the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in mobilizing international resources and coordinating the implementation of assistance projects.

13.4 The core functions of the support units are as follows:

(a) Enhancing readiness for the deployment of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams through, *inter alia*, the definition and updating of methodology and the provision of induction/refresher training;

(b) Ensuring the technical/logistical resources and support for the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams deployed to disaster sites;

(c) Serving as secretariat for the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and the International Emergency Response Consultative Mechanism;

(d) Identifying, in close coordination with the United Nations humanitarian agencies, military and civil defence resources needed in disasters/emergencies and mobilizing them from donor countries;

(e) Arranging training courses for military and civil defence personnel and, in complex emergencies, determining their legal status;

(f) Maintaining and disseminating the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities;

(g) Managing the administration of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warehouse and carrying out the replenishment of its non-food, non-medical, stocks;

(h) Arranging transport of relief items to fill gaps in emergency needs;

(i) Facilitating a coordinated approach to the optimal use of telecommunications with and in the field.

Section 14
Complex Emergency Response Branch

14.1 The Complex Emergency Response Branch, based in Geneva, is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General, through the Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator and Director of the Geneva office.

14.2 The core functions of the Branch with respect to coordination for complex emergencies are as follows:

(a) Maintaining an overview of affected country(ies)/region, through systematic pooling and analysis of emergency-related information to identify and call to the attention of the Emergency Relief Coordinator situations that may require emergency humanitarian intervention;

(b) Organizing and ensuring appropriate representation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on inter-agency fact-finding and assessment missions;

(c) Recommending the appropriate response to complex emergency situations and requests for assistance;

(d) Analysing and disseminating, as required, information received from the field, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs office in New York, agencies, non-governmental organizations, Member States and other sources, in close consultation with ReliefWeb and the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN),[3] as required, to plan and organize the incorporation of relevant emergency-related information in these information systems;

(e) Maintaining liaison and consultation with all relevant United Nations agencies, non-governmental and international organizations and Member States in Europe on complex emergencies; organizing and participating in regular inter-agency, non-governmental organization, donor and ad hoc meetings and task forces organized in Geneva and elsewhere;

(f) Providing support to the United Nations resident/humanitarian coordinator or head of lead agency in the field in the preparation and establishment of appropriate coordination mechanisms, the allocation of responsibilities among agencies and the development of humanitarian strategy;

(g) Ensuring the speedy establishment of field coordination units and monitoring their functioning, arranging, in cooperation with other relevant units of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for the fielding of qualified coordination staff and appropriate logistic and administrative support;

(h) Conducting regular liaison with the United Nations resident/humanitarian coordinator or lead agency in a complex emergency to identify policy and advocacy issues and to address problems encountered in the humanitarian programme, and determining the necessary follow-up in consultation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York;

[3] IRIN is a field-based project that serves the humanitarian community through the provision of up-to-date information and analyses on issues that affect humanitarian operations. It currently has offices in Nairobi, Abidjan and Johannesburg and covers events in East, Central, Southern and West Africa. IRIN has an estimated daily readership of 15,000 persons in over 40 countries.

(i) Monitoring and advising on relevant issues in transition, from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development.

14.3 The core functions of the Branch with respect to the inter-agency consolidated appeals process are as follows:

(a) Providing support to develop coherent field-based humanitarian strategies, credible and successful consolidated appeals, developing a strategic monitoring capacity that supports resource mobilization efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and strengthens the United Nations system accountability in complex emergencies and leading this process and focusing on management of all aspects related to the consolidated appeals process cycle;

(b) Providing detailed guidelines and support for the field and headquarters on strategic planning and strategic monitoring, as well as for planning and guiding efforts related to detailed preparation of appeals in response to complex emergencies;

(c) Coordinating consolidated appeals process-related issues with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York, humanitarian coordinators and field coordination offices responsible to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, non-governmental organizations and United Nations humanitarian agencies in collaboration with all relevant sections of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(d) Managing the technical aspects of the consolidated appeal preparation process;

(e) Following up the consolidated appeals through financial tracking of contributions and reporting, review of procedures and guidelines for the consolidated appeals process and enhancing support for resource mobilization with donors.

Section 15
Finance and Administrative Unit

15.1 The Finance and Administrative Unit, based in Geneva, is headed by a Chief who is accountable to the Director of the Geneva office.

15.2 The core functions of the Unit are as follows:

(a) Discharging the financial, personnel and general administrative responsibilities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(b) Working closely with the Executive Office in New York, particularly in respect of activities requiring a coordinated approach within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, such as programme budget submission and programme budget performance reports;

(c) Administering the trust funds and corresponding sub-accounts under the responsibility of the Geneva office;

(d) Providing all necessary support, including the preparation of financial reports.

Section 16
Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

16.1 The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction secretariat, based in Geneva, is headed by a Director who is accountable to the Under-Secretary-General.[4]

16.2 The secretariat consists of the Office of the Director and six organizational units, namely, the Management Support Unit, the Policy Coordinating Unit, the Unit for Risk Management and Vulnerability Analysis, the Promotion and Public Awareness Unit, the Science and Technology Application Unit and the Latin America and the Caribbean Unit, based in Costa Rica.

16.3 The core functions of the secretariat are as follows:

(a) Implementing the mandate of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which calls for reducing the vulnerability of population at risk from natural disasters and similar emergencies through concerted international action and the integration of disaster prevention into development planning;

(b) Promoting the integration of disaster reduction strategies into development planning at all levels, especially in developing countries;

(c) Advocating the need for political commitment and the necessary technical support to disaster reduction practices, including the application of comprehensive risk assessment as the foundation for disaster prevention;

(d) Promoting extensive community involvement in the planning and implementation of disaster prevention measures;

(e) Promoting effective early warning systems at all levels as an integral part of disaster prevention.

Section 17
Final provision

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 1 July 1999.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**
Secretary-General

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[4] The core functions of the secretariat are those mandated by specific General Assembly resolutions, including the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation (A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, annex I), in particular its Plan of Action, as adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held at Yokohama, Japan, in May 1994, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/22 A.